

Sunday, September 25, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Amos 6:1, 4-7

2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Responsorial: Psalm 146:7-10

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Responding to God's Call and Mission for Our Lives

Lying at his door was a poor man. (Luke 16:20)

Some theologians believe that few will go to heaven. Other theologians hold that the mercy of God is so great that many, if not most, will go to heaven. But no one knows for sure.

Today's Gospel is a story about the relationship between a man who lived in luxury and went to hell and a frail beggar, who went to heaven. The rich man may have been a good and honest man. We don't know, and Jesus doesn't include this detail in his parable. We do know that he loved his five brothers, but he was also indifferent to poor Lazarus.

The Bible has countless references to the poor and the forgotten (Micah 2:9; Isaiah 58:7; Nehemiah 5:1-5; Matthew 5:42; 25:31-36). Most of these passages tell us that God expects those who have more to help those who have less. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them" (2443).

If we own a piece of property, we have legal title in the eyes of the law. However, in the eyes of God, we are only his tenants. We are just stewards of his property. At the final judgment, God will ask us about our stewardship, especially our care for the poor (Matthew 25:14-30).

This was the rich man's problem. He was God's caretaker. He owed his wealth to God. What he failed to see was that the beggar Lazarus was God's representative, a person who deserved to be treated much better. All he could see was a ragged, diseased man.

Scripture tells us to share our clothes and our food and to care for the sick and the lonely (Matthew 25:35-36; Luke 3:11). It tells us that every human being has the right to live in dignity and to not go hungry or homeless. Today, let's ask, "What sacrifices can my family make so that we can reach out to the poor more fully?"

"Jesus, you became poor so that we might become rich. Help me be as generous as you are."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In the first reading, we hear of the fate of God's people who are "complacent," "stretched comfortably on their couches," "devise their own accomplishments," and "anoint themselves with the best oils." As we read these words, it is easy to say to ourselves: "I'm glad I'm not like these people."
 - In what ways can we fall into these same "complacent" actions in our own lives?
 - What steps can we take to overcome this complacency?
2. In the responsorial psalm, the fate of the selfish and self-centered persons from the first reading is contrasted with God's compassion and mercy on the person who "keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry" (Psalm 146:7).
 - How would you rate yourself against the person described in this reading?
 - What are some steps you can take individually, or with others, to respond more fully to the responsorial psalm?
3. In the second reading from the first letter to Timothy, we hear these words: "But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses." In these Scriptures, St. Paul lists various actions to be taken by a man or women of God.
 - How does the way you live out your own life each day stack up against this list?
 - How important is God's call to you to live your life as a man or women of God? Why?
4. In the Gospel, again we are faced with a contrast between two types of persons: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table." We also are faced with the difference between the fate of the selfish and self-centered rich man and the lowly poor man.
 - What do you think is the main message of this parable?
 - How does it apply to you?
5. In the meditation, we hear these words: "If we own a piece of property, we have legal title in the eyes of the law. However, in the eyes of God, we are only his tenants. We are just stewards of his property. At the final judgment, God will ask us about our stewardship, especially our care for the poor (Matthew 25:14-30)."
 - Do you agree with these words? Why or why not?
 - What should be our response to these words?
6. The meditation ends with these words: "Scripture tells us to share our clothes and our food and to care for the sick and the lonely (Matthew 25:35-36; Luke 3:11). It tells us that every human being has the right to live in dignity and to not go hungry or homeless. Today, let's ask, 'What sacrifices can my family make so that we can reach out to the poor more fully?'"
 - How can you respond to the question posed above?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to be his hands and feet to others, and to be as generous as he was -- especially to those in most need of his love and compassion. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, you became poor so that we might become rich. Help me be as generous as you are."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is

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